Worth It by BigBadLittleRed

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Summary:

Jonathan leaves the school without Nancy, leading to only himself and Steve fighting the Demogorgon, and some much different results to occur.

Or, an AU I saw on Tumblr and just couldn't resist writing.

Worth It

Author's Note:

> (This is my first Stranger Things fic and it's a little short and simple, but I've been resisting it for too long! I love Steve and Jonathan both, and I actually even ship the ot3 as well, but I think I ship Stonathan more. Anyways, I hope this is good enough for you guys, please enjoy!
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> Dedicated to the lovely blogger who posted the idea in the first place! Feelsandbooksandshit!)

Jonathan isn't sure how to handle the fact that his mom is going off with Hopper to the facility to track down his brother. It's dangerous, reckless, not to mention badly planned. He hugs her tight and watches them drive off into the chilly fall night, and then turns to head inside.

He touches the metal door handle, pausing in his tracks. He couldn't just sit here at the school while his mom risked her life to find Will; he had to do something, but what? The cold chill of the wind brushes over him and he turns his head against it to look over at his car parked nearby in the lot. Jonathan realizes then that if the monster wasn't there when his mother and Hopper entered the Upside Down it would make it much easier to find Will. The supplies he had bought with Nancy were back at the police station, it would only take a quick trip to sneak in and grab them.

He glances back at the door to the gym, where Nancy was probably waiting for him, where the kids were. If he told Nancy where he was going, she'd want in. It wasn't that he thought Nancy couldn't handle herself; she was probably more capable of taking care of herself than Jonathan was. But the kids were still here, and they couldn't just leave them alone. They were being hunted by some

weird government people; the kids would be completely vulnerable without some sort of authority. Nancy would be angry with him for doing this, might not even speak to him again, but this wasn't for her. This was for Will, for his family.

He takes off over towards his car in a hurried walk, climbing into the driver's seat and shoving his keys into the ignition. The car roars to life just as the door of the gym opens, he meets Nancy's confused eyes before he pushes into drive and takes off. He catches sight of her in his rearview as she races out into the road behind him, shouting something as he tears out of the lot and onto the street.

This wasn't about Nancy.

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Nancy leaves Jonathan to tell his mother goodbye, sitting down just in the hallway outside of the gym. She wants to kill that monster, make it pay for what it's done. It's caused too much damage to her life, erased a huge piece of it actually. It was almost as if Barb never existed, the way it took her in the night without a trace.

Nobody really knew her in the first place, nobody except for Nancy knew her as well as they should. She was blunt, honest, and loyal to boot. Jonathan actually reminded her of Barb, maybe that was why she handled his attitude so well, it was slightly comforting. He was a bit gruffer, couldn't let down his guard with Nancy like Barb had learned to do, but it was similar in certain ways.

Nancy glances up at the door, she had heard the car drive away, so where was Jonathan? She stands up, ready to head off in search for him, he might be off brooding into the night. She didn't want him getting caught alone in the dark off guard, that monster could be practically anywhere.

Her breath catches in her throat when she hears a car engine start up, and when she opens the door she sees Jonathan in his car staring right at her. She's confused at first, but then it clicks and she scowls as he takes off. Nancy knows it's useless as she runs into the parking lot behind him, his clunker of a car screeching on its wheels as it takes a sharp turn into the road.

"Don't do anything stupid!" She calls after him, even though she's sure he didn't hear her.

She stands out in the cold for a few minutes before the wind begins to nip at her cheeks too sharply, then she heads back into the gym. The kids are gathered on the bleachers, Eleven is leaning against Mike with a towel wrapped around her shoulders.

"Where's Jonathan?" Mike asks curiously, Nancy rolls her eyes.

"He's off looking for the monster." She tells them stiffly, everyone's eyes widen.

"You let him leave alone?" Dustin asks in concern, she throws her hands up in exasperation.

“Of course not, he’s just like you guys, running off on your own half-cocked!” She turns away and crosses her arms, there’s a bit of worry beginning to swell in her chest. There was no car for them to take, by the time they got to the Byers’ residence he would have already attempted to summon the monster. Besides, she couldn’t leave the kids here and she sure as hell couldn’t lead them right to the monster.

Jonathan knew this, the prick; he’d completely tied her hands.

“He’s gonna fight the Demogorgon?” Mike mutters nervously to his friends, Lucas sighs and there’s a sort of shuffle as they move closer to each other.

“He’s a goner.” Dustin says quietly, and Nancy hopes he’s wrong.

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It’s much too easy to head into the police station and grab the supplies for the trap; the one man present is asleep at his desk with the little TV playing some old sitcom. He makes two trips, and then heads out towards his own house, already second guessing himself.

Could he really do this? Could he summon the thing that had killed someone, taken his brother? Will was a smart kid, if he

couldn't escape the monster, how was Jonathan supposed to kill it? All of these thoughts ran through his head, and yet, here he was setting up to summon it to him.

He takes his time, making sure everything is set up, the bear trap, the yo-yo, and the gas. He's not as good with a gun as Nancy, so he improvises and hammers some nails into a bat. He sits down on his couch with a shaky exhale; sort of wishing Nancy was here with him. He takes the knife from his kitchen and observes his wonky reflection in it a moment and part of him wants to turn on some music just to calm his nerves.

"No playing around," He mutters to himself quietly, presses the blade to his palm. He hesitates only a moment before breaking skin, cutting deep enough for blood to begin pouring from the cut. Jonathan stands and lets the dark crimson drip into the carpet, hoping for the best.

He decides to bandage the wound after a minute; he didn't need to get lightheaded from blood loss while fighting off an interdimensional monster. Jonathan sits in the quiet and empty house, listening to every creak, on high alert. The lights haven't flickered yet; his mother had said they flickered at the monster's arrival, sort of like an alarm system.

He touches his bandage distractedly, chewing his lips as his nerves begin to get the best of him once more. What if it didn't work? Or even worse, what if it did?

He practically jumps out of his skin at the sound of the loud banging on his door, frozen in his seat as he listens to the frantic pounding.

“Jonathan!” He frowns a little, tipping his head to the side. “Are you there man? It’s… It’s Steve!” Oh god! “Listen man, I just want to talk!”

Not Steve… Anybody but Steve, he would have taken the monster over Steve. Okay, maybe not the monster, but there were a few people he’d rather see right now other than Steve. He gets to his feet, unsure about what to do. The monster could arrive at any time, Steve couldn’t be here!

He moves closer to the door as the banging continues, glancing back at his living room. It was in shambles, and if Steve saw it…

More knocking.

“Come on, man! Please, just hear me out!” Jonathan sighs and opens the door, crowding against the frame and holding the door only a fraction open. “Hey!” Steve smiles weakly, he looks like shit, and for a moment Jonathan sort of feels bad for doing that to his face. Granted, he gets over it about a fraction of a second later, but it was there for the time being.

“You can’t be here.” Jonathan says simply, Steve shakes his head and puts a hand on the door, crowding closer as his foot is placed over the threshold.

“Please, just let me talk. I messed up, okay?” His voice

quivers with sincerity, and Jonathan frowns. Steve Harrington was apologizing? Apologizing to Jonathan Byers, Steve was trying to apologize?

"It's fine, look, you have to go." Jonathan tells him firmly, but when he tries to shut the door Steve presses forward and Jonathan steps back to avoid getting hit in the face with the edge of the door.

"I'm not trying to start anything, I promise!" He holds up his hands in a sign of solidarity, but they fall as his eyes focus on Jonathan's hand. "What'd you do to your hand?" He mutters, and then his gaze focuses on the room behind him. "What the hell?"

"You need to go." Jonathan moves forward and grabs hold of Steve's shirt, trying to push him out of the door. Steve holds firm, resists his grip, eyes narrowed in confusion and slight horror.

"What's that smell?" He asks, looking past Jonathan with growing concern. "Is… Wait, is that gas?!" He grabs onto Jonathan's jacket when the shorter boy tries to push him again.

"You're forgiven, just go!" He shoves Steve towards the door, and when he looks back, his breath catches in his throat at the sight of the Christmas lights flickering. "Oh no." He mutters, he looks back at Steve, who's hovering hesitantly near the door. "It's here, you need to go."

"What?! What's here?!" He practically squeaks, it'd be funny if Jonathan weren't scared out of his mind at the moment. He

stands in the middle of the room and spins in a circle, searching for any sign of the creature. He leans over and picks up his bat off of the coffee table. “Whoa, man! Easy with that!”

He turns back to Steve, wanting him to leave and not look back, he raises the bat up. Steve’s hands come out and he steps back with fear in his eyes. Then there’s a crack as the ceiling breaks open, Jonathan turns just in time to see the monster slipping out from a hole in drywall.

“What the hell is that?!” Steve demands with a shout, Jonathan steps back from where the monster is dropping in and grabs onto Steve’s wrist.

“Come on, run!” He tugs him down the hall, looking back as he leaps over the bear trap. “Jump!” Steve obeys and skids down the hall behind him with frantic swears and exclamations, Jonathan races into Will’s room and once Steve enters he slams the door.

“Oh my god, oh my god, man!” Steve whines in terror, voice shaking as he backs towards the window. “Jesus, Jesus! What the hell was that?!” He practically screams as Jonathan pulls out his lighter and swipes his thumb over it, the flame flickers to life.

“Shut up.” Jonathan commands, Steve surprisingly falls quiet, and then there’s only the sound of their breathing. There’s a sudden whirring noise, mixed with a type of growl, the sound of the creature’s footsteps. Why wasn’t the trap springing? God, what had he done wrong?

There's a sort of flickering noise as the power surges in the slightest, and even the faintest trace noises of the monster are gone. Jonathan flicks the lighter closed and lowers the bat, taking in deep, slow breaths as he observes the door warily.

"Is… Is it gone?" Steve asks softly, making Jonathan jump in the slightest as he realizes how close he's gotten. Right near his back, close enough to feel the heat from his body, mouth right near his ear.

"I don't know." Jonathan murmurs, stepping over near the door. He presses his ear to the cool wood, swallowing roughly as he strains to hear anything. The door creaks open much too loudly for his liking, but the monster would know where he was anyway so it isn't like silence would help. He takes a step out into the hallway, bat at the ready.

The trap is fine, untouched, and the hall is empty. Steve slinks out behind him, following behind not too close but not giving them too much distance either. They step over the trap without much noise and Jonathan peers into the living room warily. No sign of it, but it was bound to return.

"This is crazy, this is crazy… This, is absolutely insane." Steve begins to mutter to himself, or maybe to Jonathan, he wasn't quite sure. But when he picks up the phone, Jonathan hurries over and yanks it from his hands. "Are you out of your mind!?" He demands, Jonathan scowls.

"It's going to be back, so you need to leave, now." He says, Steve didn't have anything to do with this. He had no idea what was going on, and couldn't hold up in a fight against Jonathan, he'd be a

hindrance more than anything else.

There's a dawning of realization on Steve's bruised up face, and then he nods a little before tearing through the living room and over to the front door. He escapes with a clatter of noise; Jonathan grips his bat tighter and looks around cautiously.

The lights begin to flicker again, more frantically this time. He turns in a slow circle, searching his surroundings and trying to keep hold of his bearings even when the lights flicker off.

"Come on, you son of a bitch." He grunts, holding his bat like a vice, fueling all of his anger into his hands. "Where are you? Show yourself, come on!" He taunts, turns again just as the lights shut off. There's an overwhelming silence, and he squints into the dark for any sign of the monster.

Something slams right into his back, he staggers to the floor, gripping the coffee table as his bat rolls onto the floor somewhere too far out of reach. He grabs the knife on the table and stands, but as soon as he turns the creature smacks him right back down into the floor.

His back collides with the ground and the air leaves his lungs in the impact, the clawed hand atop his chest pressing down on him. The lights around him flicker lazily; he stares up in shock as something akin to drool slips over his chin and neck. The thing's face parts open, like petals of a flower blooming with teeth on the surface of them.

Like a muscle memory, his hand remembers the knife before he does, and it's a shock when his arm lunges suddenly and digs the weapon into the creature's arm.

The monster shrieks and its hand moves, Jonathan takes in a choking breath and coughs it out, trying to scramble backwards away from it. The creature advances on him, like a man-eating Venus Fly Trap ready to devour him whole.

Something collides with the creature's head, and Jonathan's brain is slowly catching up as he notes the figure standing above him. Tall, dark hair, bruised up face.

"Steve?" He mutters as he's yanked to his feet, pushed back behind the taller boy. Another hit, the monster roars in anger, but Steve hits again and it staggers backwards. Jonathan checks his jacket pocket with shaky hands as the monster is veered off into the hallway, and when the bear trap snaps shut he's got the lighter in hand.

"He's in the trap!" Steve exclaims as Jonathan's thumb swipes in an easy motion to ignite the flame and he throws the lighter down at the monster's feet. It lights up in a blaze, screeching in agony as both boys hold up their arms to protect their faces from the heat.

When the flames die down, there's nothing left but a burnt mark on the carpet. Silence engulfs the house once more, and Jonathan stares at the space in shock. Was that it? Did they kill it?

“Is it dead?” Steve asks hesitantly, Jonathan realizes he’s holding the bat he’d hammered nails into. Steve had come back, Steve had saved him. He could have gone home, stayed out of this, but he risked his life for Jonathan of all people.

“I don’t know.” Jonathan says quietly, then turns away and runs his hands through his hair. He’s shaking a little with adrenaline, monster spit drying on his face and exhaustion already starting to press in on him.

They both perk up a little when the lights begin to flicker on, leading them down the hallway and into the living room. At first, Jonathan thinks the monster is coming back, and he realizes they didn’t make a back-up plan for all of this. But after a moment, the lights head to the front door, in a different way.

“Is it coming back?” Steve asks, the bat still held up defensively in his hands.

“Mom?” Jonathan murmurs, staring at the lights. “Is that you?” He whispers in awe, not sure how he can tell. It’s like the energy around him is the one that he felt on bad days when the boys at school would pick on him, when she’d make him cocoa and hug him tight and tell him it was okay. That feeling of safety his mother always carried around, it was practically buzzing around him.

“Your mom is in the lights?” Steve asks in confusion, and when Jonathan turns to meet his eyes he can’t help but grin. Steve offers him a wary nervous smile in return, and Jonathan laughs. He laughs in relief, in joy, in exhaustion. He’d done his part; hopefully his mom could do the rest with Hopper at her side.

“Do you want cocoa?” He questions, Steve’s eyebrows raise up near his hairline in surprise. His hands drop to his sides, bat limp in his right hand, he frowns a little.

“I could go for some cocoa,” He says after a moment, running a hand through his hair with a shaky laugh. “Does this happen often?” He asks, Jonathan shrugs his shoulders and sighs.

“It’s a long story.” He says quietly, Steve drops the bat near the coffee table and crosses his arms.

“I’ve got all night.” He offers, and Jonathan nods slowly.

“All right, come on then.” He leads the other into the kitchen, pulling out some mugs. “It all started when Will went missing,” He explains as Steve sits down at the counter, dropping his head on his arms.

“Hey, man.” Steve cuts him off, Jonathan turns to look at him in confusion. “I’m sorry about all the shit I said about you and your family,” He mutters, eyes intense and soulful. “I was pissed but that wasn’t cool, I was a dick.” He admits, Jonathan nods and turns on the tap water to fill up the kettle.

“You saved my life, I think we’re even.” Jonathan scoffs, Steve smirks. They’re quiet for a moment, just the creaks of the woodwork, the wind, and the sound of the tap accompanying them.

Jonathan makes the cocoa, and they sit across from each other. They talk while sipping at the warm chocolatey goodness, even if it is a bit chalky. If he buries his nose deep enough in his cup while he drinks to block out the scent of smoke and gas, it seems like any other night. Well, other than the fact that Steve Harrington is sitting in his kitchen having cocoa with him, of course.

"So you just left them there?" Steve asks with a frown as he finishes his cocoa, smacking his lips a little. Jonathan nods, he does feel a little guilty about that, but it was for the best. He sort of expects Steve to get angry maybe, to tell him it was stupid to do such a selfish thing. But he laughs, covering his mouth with his hand. "I bet Nancy was pissed."

"She was shouting at me as I pulled out of the parking lot." Jonathan confesses, and they both fall into a fit of laughter. Whether it's from surviving a near death experience by a monster, or just the fact that they took some time to get to know one another, they seemed quite companionable to each other.

"I'd hate to be you when Nancy Wheeler gets ahold of you." Steve sighs, leaning forward against the counter and balancing his cheek on his hand.

"Nah, she's soft on me." Jonathan shrugs it off, even though he really doesn't believe it himself. Nancy might not ever speak to him again, and hell, this was probably the last time he was going to talk to Steve either. They'd go back to their lives after this, and he'd go back to his. It's a lonely thought, but a realistic one.

“You remember back in eighth grade when everyone got invited to Renee Quinn’s ‘End of Middle School’ party?” Steve questions suddenly, dropping his hands down to his empty cup as if they were looking for something to hold. His eyes focus on the inside of the cup, Jonathan finds himself doing the same thing, watching the swirls of cocoa powder separating from the water and milk they’d been messily mixed in with.

“Yeah, it was my first party… And my last.” Jonathan confesses, and when he looks up, Steve looks that much guiltier. They both know why, it was a memorable event, and one of the worst nights of Jonathan’s young life until this whole monster business. “We played spin the bottle, and I sat between Jimmy Cavanaugh and Tracy Warner.” Jonathan reminisces quietly, thinking back on that night which was still too vivid for his liking.

“The rule was usually that if you got someone who was the same gender as you, you’d spin again.” Steve hurries to explain; Jonathan frowns, he hadn’t known that. But it made sense, of course, but back then he’d just assumed you had to do it anyway.

“So it was just a sort of last second prank, yeah?” Jonathan asks, Steve nods and ducks his head a little. He obviously felt bad, but Jonathan felt like he needed to squirm for it. He’d been practically traumatized over that night, didn’t go to school for two days the week after, cried in his room the entire weekend.

“Tommy spoke up before I could tell you, and then we just sort of shoved you in the closet and told you to wait.” Steve tells him softly, wringing his hands on the table top. “At first Tommy wanted to get Renee’s dog, but…” He shakes his head, grimacing.

“But instead he had you take me outside so they could dump me in the trashcan and pour soda on me.” Jonathan mutters, Steve sighs. It’s how he’d gotten labeled a queer in the first place, willing to kiss another boy even though it was spin the bottle. He didn’t want to be a pansy, and besides, he didn’t mind kissing boys as much as his father insisted he should.

He’d been taken out into the garage, Steve holding his wrist gently. They’d turned to each other when they reached a dark corner, and Jonathan had leaned in. The lights had snapped on, Tommy H. and Robbie Walker had grabbed him and dropped him down into the trashcan. When he’d opened the lid, Tracy had been there to pour the soda over his head. He’d walked home soaked and sticky, crying his eyes out.

“I only remember a few instances, but I’m sure there were more.” Steve says, reaching over and patting his arm. “For all of them, whatever anybody’s done to you, I’m sorry.” He whispers, Jonathan offers him a weak smile.

“It’s okay, I’m weird and if you wouldn’t have done it, others would have.” He shrugs, pushing his mug away from him.

“You’re not weird, you’re just…” Steve frowns, obviously trying to choose his next words carefully. “Different… I mean, talking to you, you seem okay. But standing far away from people and staring intensely is kind of creepy, man.” He offers with a hesitant laugh, smiling a little brighter when Jonathan laughs.

“I’m not good with people, I never was.” He runs a hand through his hair, sighing. Jonathan stands up and takes their cups, setting them in the sink to wash later.

He steps back from the sink and heads towards the kitchen door, stretching his arms above his head. His body is a little sore from the monster roughing him up, surely it'd be worse in the morning. "We should probably pick up-" He turns back, breath catching in his throat when he finds Steve much too close to him.

They stare at each other for a long moment, and when Steve's eyes glance down at Jonathan's lips he can't help but swallow. Steve's hands touch his sides with hesitant fingers, and when Jonathan doesn't move he leans in and their lips meet. It's nothing very special or significant, just a simple press of their mouths.

When Steve leans away, Jonathan clears his throat and blinks rapidly.

"Pick up Nancy and the kids." He finishes meekly, Steve steps back and his hands go to his own hips. He stares at Jonathan a moment, expression a mix of concern and vulnerability.

"Was that okay?" He asks quietly, Jonathan opens his mouth and it stays that way for a long moment. He's not sure what to say, his mind almost completely blank, but then it all begins to catch up with him.

"Nancy." Jonathan stammers first, Steve's expression shutters and he nods slowly and his gaze falls to the floor.

“Right, you like Nancy.” He says, sounding almost bitter?

“No! Well, kind of! You like Nancy!” Jonathan gestures wildly, Steve looks up at him with a frown.

“I like you too. Besides, I kind of messed that up, like I do with pretty much everything.” He says softly, crossing his arms, not defensively but in a more self-hugging sort of motion. Jonathan shakes his head and steps forward.

“You could still get her back, if you wanted. She loves you.” Jonathan promises the other, even though it pains him a little. He wants Steve’s lips on his again, that old flame of a crush flickering back to life at the idea that Steve liked him too. But it wasn’t right; he wouldn’t do this to Nancy.

“Nancy and I, it’s not like that anymore.” He explains without really explaining anything at all. But at the same time, Jonathan gets it, he really does. Some things last, others don’t. His crush on Nancy had dwindled significantly the moment Steve apologized wholeheartedly to him and made him laugh. “I know it doesn’t make sense, at all really.” He hurries to add.

“I’d kiss you to shut you up, but I really don’t know how.” Jonathan says suddenly, and Steve’s eyes widen in awe for a moment before they soften.

“I’ll show you,” He whispers breathlessly, shuffling further into Jonathan’s space. “If you want,” His fingers touch Jonathan’s chin gently, tipping his head up, Jonathan nods ever so slightly

before their lips are together again.

This time it's different, the press is more of a shift of movement, Steve's mouth over his. He lets himself be led, hesitantly testing the ground and resting his hands on the taller boy's shoulders. The kiss is slow, unhurried, and when Steve breaks them apart a little noise that sounds similar to a whimper escapes Jonathan's throat.

"You are gorgeous, Jonathan Byers." He smirks, lips a cherry red, Jonathan wonders if his own are a similar shade. He wonders what Nancy will think about this, or how they'll handle going to school with each other. Would Steve let this be a fling, or would Jonathan be his dirty little secret? It would hurt, but he wouldn't quite mind it as much as Steve forgetting about this by the time Monday rolled around.

Steve surprises him with a kiss to his forehead, before smoothing his bangs down for him. It was gentle, caring, things that Jonathan never associated with Steve Harrington.

"Come on, we should go get Nancy and the kids, I'd like to keep my limbs." He smirks, and when he moves past Jonathan he grabs his hand. Jonathan follows behind him in a numb sort of state, watching the easy grip of their fingers grasping at one another. It made him feel safe in a way he'd never felt before, different from his mom and Will.

He thinks back to the party in middle school, to the fight that seemed like a year ago but was so fresh Steve was still developing the bruises to prove it. Jonathan realizes that if it all led up to this, walking out of his house holding hands with Steve Harrington, it was sort of worth it.

Author's Note:

(Thanks for reading! Please comment and kudos if you liked, I'd really appreciate it!)